

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
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AMEMBASSY PANAMA
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN
AMEMBASSY SANJOSE
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
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S E C R E T MANAGUA 0839

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDIP, NU, XL, CU, RO, UR, US
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT SOMOZA DISCUSSES RELATIONS WITH CARIBBEAN AND
COMMUNIST STATES AND QUESTIONS U.S. CUBAN POLICY

REF: (A) MANAGUA 0836, (B) MANAGUA 0837 (NOTAL (C) MANAGUA 0838
(NOTAL)

SUMMARY: AT MEETING FEBRUARY 18, NICARAGUAN PRESIDENT SOMOZA
DISCUSSED WITH AMBASSADOR HIS INITIATIVES TO ESTABLISH DIPLOMATIC
RELATIONS WITH JAMAICA, TRINIDAD-TOBAGO, BARBADOS, BUYANA,
ROMANIA AND OTHER THIRD WORLD STATES. SOMOZA SAID HE WAS UNCLEAR
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ABOUT U.S. POSITION ON RECOGNITION OF COMMUNIST STATES, PARTICULARLY
THE USSR, BY FRIENDLY COUNTRIES LIKE NICARAGUA. HE ALSO EXPRESSED
UNEASINESS ABOUT WHAT HE TERMED CONTRADICTORY STATEMENTS BY U.S.
OFFICIALS REGARDING CUBAN MILITARY PRESENCE IN ANGOLA, WHICH HE
CLAIMED LEFT HIM CONFUSED. END SUMMARY.

1. ON FEBRUARY 18, 1977, AMBASSADOR MET WITH PRESIDENT SOMOZA IN

HIS OFFICE TO DISCUSS RANGE OF TOPICS OF MUTUAL INTERESTE, INCLUDING: (A) HUMAN RIGHTS, (B) PANAMA CANAL NEGOTIATIONS, (C) CHANCERY PROPERTY TRANSFER, (D) NICARAGUA'S CARIBEEAN AND COMMUNIST DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS (E) U.S.POLICY TOWARDS CUBA. THE FIRST THREE TOPICS ARE COVERED IN SEPARATE TELEGRAMS (REFTELS A, B, AND C). THE LATTER TWO ARE THE SUBJECT OF THIS DESPATCH.

2. RELATIONS WITH CARIBBEAN STATES. PRESIDENT SOMOZA CONFIRMED THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WAS ACTIVELY EXPLORING POSSIBILITY OF ESTABLISHING DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH THE FOUR ENGLISH-SPEAKING CARIBBEAN REPUBLICS: JAMAICA, TRINIDAD-TOBAGO, BARBADOS AND GUYANA. HOWEVER, DISCUSSIONS WERE ADVANCED ONLY WITH JAMAICA AND TRINIDAD-TOBAGO. IN ANY CASE, HE SAID, NICARAGUA WOULD NOT MAINTAIN RESIDENT AMBASSADORS, HIS UN AMBASSADOR WOULD SERVE AS NICARAGUA'S ACCREDITED DIPLOMATIC AGENT FOR THE CARIBBEAN REPUBLICS. WHEN QUESTIONED ABOUT NICARAGUA'S INTEREST IN DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH THE AFRICAN AND ASIAN STATES, SOMOZA REPLIED THAT INTEREST EXISTED BUT GAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT ONLY PRELIMINARY CONTACTS HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED.

3. RELATIONS WITH COMMUNIST STATES. THE PRESIDENT REPORTED THAT HE WAS REVIEWING NICARAGUA'S POLICY CONCERNING DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH THE COMMUNIST STATES. AFTER POINTING OUT THAT RELATIONS HAD BEEN RECENTLY RE-ESTABLISHED WITH POLAND, HE SAID THAT ROMANIA HAD SHOWN PERSISTENT INTEREST IN DIPLOMATIC TIES ON THE SAME BASIS AS POLAND, I.E., WITH THE EXCHANGE OF NON-RESIDENT AMBASSADORS. SOMOZA ASSERTED THAT RELATIONS WOULD PROBABLY BE ESTABLISHED WITH ROMANIA FAIRLY SOON. HE CLAIMED THAT NICARAGUA HAD LITTLE TO GAIN FROM DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH THE COMMUNIST
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STATES BUT THAT US POLICY OF DETENTE WITH THE USSR HAD COMPELLED HIM TO RECONSIDER. HE SAID THAT HE WAS NOT SURE ANY MORE WHAT THE UNITED STATES WANTED. AMBASSADOR REPLIED THAT THE DECISION TO INITIATE DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH THE COMMUNIST OR NON-COMMUNIST STATES WAS EXCLUSIVELY AN INTERNAL AFFAIR OF THE NICARAGUAN GOVERNMENT ON WHICH WE COULD NOT PRESUME TO PASS JUDGMENT. NEVERTHELESS, PRESIDENT SOMOZA EXPRESSED INTEREST IN DISCUSSING AT GREATER LENGTH U.S. POSITION CONCERNING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH THE USSR. AMBASSADOR TOLD SOMOZA THAT HE DID NOT BELIEVE THERE WAS MORE TO ADD BUT WOULD BE HAPPY TO MEET WITH HIM AT HIS CONVENIENCE.

4. U.S. POLICY TOWARDS CUBA. THE PRESIDENT INDICATED THAT HE THOUGHT THE STATEMENTS OF PRESIDENT CARTER AND SECRETARY VANCE CONCERNING THE ADMINISTRATION'S DESIRE TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS WITH CUBA WERE SENSIBLY CAUTIOUS. HE SAID THAT HE WAS SURPRISED AND DISTURBED, HOWEVER, BY THE DECLARATION OF THE U.S. UNITED NATIONS AMBASSADOR TO THE EFFECT THAT CUBA'S PRESENCE IN ANGOLA WAS A STABILIZING FACTOR. SOMOZA SAID THAT IT WAS WELL KNOWN THAT

CUBAN INTERVENTION IN ANGOLA WAS A COMBINED SOVIET-CUBAN MILITARY OPERATION, WITH CUBA PROVIDING THE MANPOWER. HE ASKED WHETHER THE U.S. NO LONGER VIEWED THE USSR AS A THREAT, AND IF THAT WAS SO, WHY DID THE UNITED STATES MAINTAIN SUCH A LARGE DEFENSE BUDGET, AND AGAINST WHOM WAS THE UNITED STATES ARMING ITSELF? AT THIS POINT, AMBASSADOR INTERJECTED THAT SECRETARY VANCE HAD STATED CLEARLY THE ADMINISTRATION'S POSITION: THE UNITED STATES OPPOSED CUBA'S MILITARY PRESENCE IN ANGOLA AND CONSIDERED IT AN UNDESIRABLE INTRUSION. SOMOZA REPLIED THAT UNFORTUNATELY SECRETARY VANCE'S CLARIFICATION DID NOT RECEIVE THE SENSATIONAL MEDIA COVERAGE THAT THE U.N. AMBASSADOR'S STATEMENT DID. HE CONCLUDED BY SAYING THAT CONTRADICTORY STATEMENTS BY US OFFICIALS HAD HIM AND EVERYONE ELSE CONFUSED AS TO WHAT U.S. POLICY REALLY IS.

5. COMMENT: SOMOZA'S UNEASINESS ABOUT SHIFT IN U.S. POLICY TOWARDS CUBA AND WHAT HE PERCEIVES AS CONTRADICTORY ADMINISTRATION VIEWS ON CUBA IS PART OF DEEPER UNCERTAINTY ABOUT DIRECTION OF US

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FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES BUT HE ENTERTAINS FEARS ABOUT HOW NEW ADMINISTRATION'S POLICIES ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND DETENTE WILL AFFECT NICARAGUAN SECURITY, AND ESPECIALLY HIS OWN POSITION. LIKE OTHER WEAK, VULNERABLE COUNTRIES IN HEMISPHERE, NICARAGUA IS HIGHLY SENSITIVE TO NUANCES IN U.S. POLICY AND ADJUSTS ITS OWN POLICIES ACCORDINGLY. IN RECENT YEARS, SOMOZA PREDICTABLY HAS MOVED TO DEFEND REGIME IN MORE FLUID AND COMPLEX INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH IT IS PERCEIVED THAT SGMS. CONCERN FOR NICARAGUA'S WELFARE AND SECURITY CAN NO LONGER BE TAKEN FOR GRANTED. CONSEQUENTLY, SOMOZA HAD TAKEN STEPS TO DIVERSIFY NICARAGUA'S DIPLOMATIC, COMMERCIAL AND MILITARY TIES. NICARAGUA'S DIPLOMATIC INITIATIVES IN THE CARIBBEAN, COMMUNIST GROUP AND THIRD WORLD MUST BE UNDERSTOOD IN THIS CONTEXT. THEBERGE

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